



Room 3146 Phone (916) 445-4383
State Capitol Sacramento, 95814

CHARLES J. CONRAD

ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MARCH 24, 1970

Contact: Janet Hothersall
(916) 445-4383

Assemblyman Charles J. Conrad, Speaker pro Tempore of the California Assembly, today charged that "scientists with strong political motives are twisting scientific facts to achieve ends detrimental to the nation".

Conrad directed his remarks to those scientists who have been critical of the defoliation program in Vietnam. Specifically named were Dr. Joshua Lederberg of the Stanford University School of Medicine, Dr. Matthew Meselson of Harvard University, and Dr. Victor W. Sidel of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Conrad, recognized as an expert in the use of chemicals in military operations, claimed those scientists had made specious inference that the chemical 2,4,5,-T produces deformities in animals and humans.

"It is true that initial experiments conducted at the Bionetics Research Laboratory outside Washington, D.C., where an impure form of 2,4,5,-T was utilized, produced some birth defects in rats. However, subsequent tests conducted in other laboratories using commercial 2,4,5,-T, but with the toxic substance virtually eliminated, showed no evidence of defects in either rats or rabbits.

"It is inconceivable to me," said Conrad, "that these scientists did not know the facts concerning these tests, since the companies

producing 2,4,5,-T went to considerable lengths rebuilding plants after the toxic impurity was discovered."

Conrad pointed out that Dr. Lederberg had written a number of columns criticizing the Army chemical and biological warfare activities, that Dr. Meselson had circulated a petition signed by 5,000 United States' scientists urging President Johnson to end the defoliation program in Vietnam, and Dr. Sidel was a member of the left wing Physicians for Social Responsibility. "To put it mildly, these gentlemen are prejudiced", said Conrad.

"Another scare story claimed that both humans and animals had been injured near Globe, Arizona, following the use of 2,4,5,-T by the United States Forest Service. Walter Cronkite reported on national television that an unusually large number of women in the area recently have reported severe damage to reproductive organs. Congressman Richard McCarthy of New York, long a critic of the defoliation program, rushed to the scene in Arizona to be photographed with a deformed goat. There is no scientific substantiation of these stories.

"The American people must realize that elimination of the defoliation program in Vietnam will cost American lives", said Conrad. "But this is only part of the story. The next target will be the Safeguard antiballistic missile system. Already politically oriented scientists are claiming the ABM radars emit such powerful radiation as to endanger the health of missile launching crews.

"The time has come for other scientists, scientists who believe that the best way to insure peace is to keep our country strong, to expose the propaganda coming from their politically oriented colleagues and explain to the public the inaccuracies, and even falsehoods, now being disseminated through the news media."